

SEEING GOD'S GOODNESS HERE NO. 3017

A SERMON
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"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."
Psalm 27:13

WE were favored with very much of God's goodness last Sabbath evening, when we considered the rule of grace in guiding a believer's life, namely, that instead of seeing in order to believe, he has learned to believe in order to see [Sermon #766, Believing To See]. "Unless I had believed to see," says the psalmist, "I had fainted," and we should never have known true refreshment, nor enjoyed the comforts of the Lord, but should have been full of doubts, and distracted with fears if we had not learned the sacred art of believing although we did not see, or even believing in spite of what we did see, or believing in order that we might see, fully expecting that sight would inevitably follow if our faith were but simple and true.

Those of you, who were present last Sabbath evening, will remember that I restricted my remarks for the most part, to the one matter of our salvation. I tried to show to seekers that instead of looking for evidences of salvation first, and then believing in Christ, they were to believe in Christ in order to obtain those evidences—that, instead of looking to their repentance and then having confidence in Christ, their repentance sprang from their confidence in Christ—that, instead of saying, "We are not fully sanctified, and therefore fear we are not saved," they were to remember that the certainty of their being saved by grace through faith, would be to their minds and hearts, the great motive power by which they would be enabled to obtain that sanctification which cannot be theirs as long as they remain in legal bondage, and have doubts about being "accepted in the Beloved."

There were some set at liberty last Sabbath evening, who had really known the Lord for years, but were afraid to say definitely that they had trusted in Christ, and that, therefore, they were saved. May God grant that all of us may not only come to Christ, but may we also exercise a simple, childlike faith, which takes God's Word as it stands in this blessed Book, believes it, receives it, lives upon it, asks no questions concerning it, and will allow none to be asked by others,

On this occasion I propose to make a particular application of the general principle of our text. David was a man of many troubles. Especially in the latter part of his life, he was incessantly in the furnace, and he says that he would have "fainted" under these many troubles if he had not "believed to see," in the particular matter of his trials, "the goodness of the LORD" in that land which is the special sphere of trouble.

David believed to see the goodness of the Lord, not only in the glory land yonder, but also in this land here below. He believed to see the goodness of the Lord, not merely when he emerged from the furnace, but also while he was in it. As a pilgrim and a stranger, he believed to see the goodness of the Lord during the days of his pilgrimage. He did not always see it, but he believed to see it, he believed in it and anticipated it, and by believing in it, he did actually come to see it with the eyes of his mind, and to rejoice in it.

We all know that this world is a very unpromising field for faith, according to our varied experiences, we must all subscribe to the declaration that this earth is, more or less, a valley of tears, that it is not our rest, for it is polluted. There are too many thorns in this nest for us to abide comfortably in it. This world is under the curse, so it still brings forth thorns and thistles, and in the sweat of our face do

we eat our bread until we return to the earth out of which man was at first taken. Were this world really to be our home, it would be a terrible fate for us, if we were always to live in this huge penal settlement, it would be sad indeed for us to know that we had continually to dwell where the shadow of the curse ever lingers, and where we have only the shadow of the cross to sustain us under it.

But faith comes into this unpromising field and believes that she shall see the goodness of the Lord even here. She rushes into the fiercest fight that ever rages here, fully believing that she shall see the banner of the Lord's mercy and truth waving even there. She bears the burden and heat of the earthly toil, and expects to experience the lovingkindness of the Lord beneath it all. She knows that she will see more of her God in the land beyond the flood, but still, she believes to see the goodness of the Lord even in this land of the living which is so distracted and disturbed with sorrows, and cares, and trials, and tribulations.

I want to show you first, that *faith is infallibly persuaded of God's goodness here*, secondly, that *she expects clearly to see that goodness here*, and thirdly, that *it is this expectation and belief which sustain the soul of the tried believer*.

I. First then, FAITH IS INFALLIBLY ASSURED OF THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD IN THIS TIME STATE.

She is persuaded of this from what she knows of God Himself. She could not believe that He could be otherwise than good. She reads the promises recorded in His Word, and she believes that they are all true and reliable. She can detect nothing that is unkind or ungenerous in any of them, they are all couched in the softest, gentlest, and most consoling words. The language used seems to her to have been selected on purpose to meet her case, and to make the promise suitable and sweet to her sorrowing heart. She feels sure that God could not be unkind.

With the psalmist she cries, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart," and though, like the psalmist, she may have to write afterwards, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped," yet she stands fast to her first declaration, "Truly God is good to Israel," however much surrounding circumstances may seem to prove the contrary, she knows that from the necessity of the divine nature, God must be good to His people both here and hereafter.

When faith turns to the Bible and reads the history of the Lord's people, she sees that God has been good to them, and knowing that He is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever," she draws the cheering inference that He will also be good to her. Inasmuch as she can distinctly see that the trials and difficulties of the saints in the olden times, always wrought their lasting good, she is convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt, that her trials and troubles, overruled by the same loving Lord who cared for them, will work her lasting good, and that God will bless her now as He blessed His saints in the olden time.

Perhaps some of you have faith, but yet, possibly through lack of thought, you have not exercised it upon this particular point. If you are given to murmuring against God, you will often think thoughts which you would not like to hear or to see in spoken or written language. If someone should say to you, "God has been very unkind to you, I am sure that you cannot see the goodness of God displayed in your life," you would at once turn round upon such a slanderer and defend the character of your God from such an unjust accusation.

Although you often murmur against the Lord in your spirit, yet if another person should say in words what you have felt in your heart, you would then see the wickedness of your murmuring, and you would also see that in the depths of your soul, there is a firm confidence in the goodness of God to you. You need to stir up that holy fire and set it blazing, so that you may get comfort from its warmth, for it is true and it must be true, that God is now good, and always good, and good to the highest possible degree of goodness to all His children in their worst calamities, and their darkest seasons of sorrow.

But there are some conditions of life in which it is really a trial to faith to believe in the goodness of the Lord, as for instance, that of *long continued dire poverty*. Some of God's choicest saints are so poor that they not only lack luxuries, but they even lack the very necessities of life. As a rule, possibly without exception, God does give His people bread and water, but sometimes the bread is only a very

small portion and the cup of water is a very tiny one. I have known a child of God, who has said to me, "I have struggled hard against poverty, I have undertaken first this, and then that, but in every case, I have failed. My little vessel has tried to enter the harbor of prosperity, but the cruel winds have always driven it back again into the rough sea of adversity. If I had been a spendthrift, if I had been wasteful in the days of my prosperity, or if I had not used my substance for the cause of God, I could understand my non-success. If God would again entrust me with ample means, I would cheerfully give to His cause, as I used to do, but alas! I have not anything left after my daily needs are supplied."

Unbelief asks, "can this be the goodness of the Lord?" But Faith answers, "Yes, it is, and it must be, I should faint in this poverty, I should give up in despair if, under all my trials and hardships, I were not sure of the goodness of God to me. If I were even starving to death, God should still have a good word out of my dying mouth. Even if He should let me die of starvation, it must be right, and He must be good."

There are others of God's children whose trials come from *constant sickness*, and some forms of illness are so trying that we are apt to ask ourselves why we should be subjected to them. I talked this morning with an aged sister in Christ, who years ago, met with an accident by which her head was so severely injured, that every alternate day her pain is almost unbearable. She can never go up to the house of God because the sound of the preacher's voice, or of the singing of the congregation, would be more than she could endure.

When we talked together, gently and softly, concerning the things of God, she quoted to me Psalm 119:75, "I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness have afflicted me." If anyone asks, "Can it be the goodness of the Lord thus to keep away one who really loves His house, and prizes His ordinances, to send her such sore sickness?"—we must reply, "Yes, it must be right. We cannot see how God's goodness can thus be manifested, but we are to believe that it is."

I may be addressing some others, who are subject to peculiarly trying infirmities, which un-fit you for the work you love, and the field of service where you have long been so happy and useful. Well, dear friends, in such a case as that, you must believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living in thus making your life to be one of sickness, and weariness, and pain.

The same rule also applies to *our bereavements*. How mysterious are the dispositions of providence in this matter! Many whom we cannot afford to lose are taken away from us, while others who seem to do no good, continue to live. Death appears to spare the hemlock, and to cut down the oak and the cedar. Where there is a man who only cumbers the ground, he is often allowed to remain, while others who are like pillars of Christ's church are taken away.

I know a little village where there were but a few poor inhabitants, and one man of substance whom I very greatly esteemed. Towards the small salary of the pastor in that village, my friend contributed three-fourths, if not nine-tenths. He was the mainstay of that little Christian community. When I found him last week very ill with fever, and joined with other friends in earnest prayer that his life might be spared, it seemed to us absolutely essential to the welfare of that village church that he should be kept here at least a little longer.

But now that the Lord has taken him home to Himself, what can we say? We must not begin to cavil at what God has done, but say to Him, "We are sure that whatsoever Thou doest is right, it cannot be wrong, it cannot be unkind, it must be the kindest thing that could have happened, the very thing which we should have wished to happen if we could have known what Thou knowest, and if we could have formed our judgment upon the same principle as swayed Thine infallible judgment."

We sometimes fancy that we should like to make a slight alteration in some of the arrangements of divine providence. We would not interfere with the great wheels that are always revolving, but just here and there, where a small cog rather inconveniently touches our personal interests, we would like to have it so altered as to let us alone, but remorselessly, as we sometimes imagine, the great wheels grind on, our comforts are taken from us, and our joy is destroyed.

What then? Why, let us still say, "Lord, not our will, but thine be done," and let us kiss the hand that wields the rod as much as the one that bestows choice gifts upon us. It is far easier for me to say this than it is for you poor widow to carry it out—easier for me to say it than it is for that weeping mother, who has seen all her children taken before her to the silent tomb.

But my sisters, my brothers, if it is harder for you, then so much the more earnestly would I urge you to say it, for the very difficulty of the submission, when you have rendered it, would prove the sincerity of your confidence in your God, and bring more glory to Him. So, as we take our friends and relatives to the tomb, and commit the precious dust to the earth, let us still believe to see the goodness of the Lord even there.

If we do not look at our sorrows in that light, we shall faint under our repeated losses and bereavements, but if that is the light in which we view them, we shall see a glory gilding even the graves that cover the bodies of our departed loved ones, and shall rejoice in the full assurance of the goodness of the Lord to us, and even more to those who have gone to be "for ever with the LORD."

Another matter may perhaps, have greatly troubled some of you, namely, *your unanswered prayers*. You have been praying for certain people for a long time, but so far you have received no answer to your supplications. There is a brother here, who has prayed for years for the conversion of his wife, yet she is still unconverted. If he yields to unbelief, he will have many difficult questions to answer. God has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive." You have asked for a thing which, apparently, is for God's glory, yet you have not received it, and this will sometimes be a staggering blow to the earnest pleader.

Some of you have prayed, as I have done, for the life of a friend, or you have sought some other favor from the hands of God, but He has not granted it. I believe there is a brother here, who has carried an unanswered prayer about with him for ten or a dozen years. I have known cases of believers praying for thirty years, and yet not obtaining what they asked for, and some of them, like the worthies of old, have "died in faith, not having received the promises." They have not lived to see one of their children converted, yet their children have been converted, and saved through their prayers too, long after the parents slept in their graves.

In the cases of unanswered prayers, there is always the temptation to believe that God has not been faithful to His promises, so that this bitter draught of unbelief is an addition to the sorrow which you feel at your non-success at the mercy seat. This is the time when you will faint unless you believe to see the goodness of the Lord even now and here. You must feel that, in any case, God's will must be done. You must still continue to pray, for you do not know what God's will is, but you must pray with resignation, after your Savior's perfect model in the garden of Gethsemane, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." You will be comforted and helped if you can look upon your unanswered prayers in that light.

And dear brethren, there is another thing that will sometimes press upon you very heavily, namely, *the desertions which occasionally fall to the lot of the believer as to his communion with God*. Sometimes we are left in the dark. Whether you are or not, I know that I have been where I could not see sun, or moon, or stars, or even get so much as a look from my Master to cheer my sad heart, or a word from His mouth to make my spirit glad.

At such times we must remember that ancient message, "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." If you cannot see, you must believe to see, and if your heart feels like a stone, still believe that Christ is your life, and if, instead of holy meditations, your soul is racked with blasphemous temptations and evil thoughts, still hold on to Jesus, sink or swim. If instead of clear evidences of salvation, you are half afraid that the Lord has forsaken you, and given you up, and you fall into an unbelieving frame of mind, go again to the fountain filled with blood, that this sin, like all others, may be washed away.

Trust Christ all the more "when the enemy shall come in like a flood," for then, "the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." Those must be strange Christians who never have any conflict raging within their souls. If that is true Christian experience, I wish I could get it—to be always

at peace and at rest, and never again have to wrestle with sins, doubts and fears. But beloved, if we cannot attain to that position—and I believe that the most of us cannot—let us still walk by faith, for so, we shall walk triumphantly even under the discouragements of our inward spiritual conflicts.

One other point I must mention, and then I will leave this part of the subject. To many believers, the sharpest trials they ever have to endure arise from *troubles connected with the church of Christ*. What a grief it is to the godly when any portion of the church of Christ does not prosper, when bickerings arise among the members, when one brother or sister is jealous of another, and when all our attempts to mend the split only make it worse.

It must be very trying for some of you to have to go on the Lord's-day to listen to a minister who does not edify you, but rather provokes you to wrath, or to attend church meetings, as I know that some do, and find them anything but a means of grace, or to have to meet with professors who, in their common conduct and conversation, instead of leading you onward and upward, do you as much mischief as if they were men of the world. It is sad to see even one of God's ministers sound asleep, and to see other professing Christians careless and worldly, and to see the whole ship of the church like the vessel described by the Ancient Mariner—

*"As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean;"*

when there was no motion, no advance, when—

"The very deep did rot."

It is a dreadful thing when there is such a horrid deathlike calm as this, yet even amidst such trials as these, we must believe to see the goodness of the Lord. We must still believe that the great Head of the church has not forgotten her, that in her darkest times He still wears her name upon His heart, and that He will yet return to her in mercy, cast out all her enemies, repair her broken walls, and cause the banner of His love to float again over her citadel.

II. Now secondly, and very briefly, FAITH NOT ONLY BELIEVES IN THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD, BUT SHE EXPECTS TO SEE IT EVEN HERE

Sometimes she sees it very soon. God does not guarantee to let His people see here the reason for all His providential dealings with them, but He does occasionally do so. There is many a believer who has lived to see the goodness of God to him. Bernard Gilpin's case was a very clear one. As he was on his way to London to be burned at the stake, his leg was broken, and he had to stop on the road. He said it was all for the best, and so it was, for when he reached London, the bells were ringing, for Queen Mary was dead, and Queen Elizabeth had come to the throne, so he was not burned, the breaking of his leg had saved his life.

Some of us have also seen the goodness of the Lord displayed under very strange circumstances. It was so in connection with that terrible calamity at the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. Notwithstanding all the sorrow and suffering that it brought upon us, as we now look back upon it, we see how God, by means of that calamity, called public attention to the preaching of His Word, and I have no doubt that for every life that was then lost, a thousand souls have since been saved from going down to the pit, so let God's name be praised for that gracious overruling of a terrible crime.

You may not have to wait even a day before you will distinctly see the goodness of the Lord, but you must believe it before you see it. It must be a matter of duty to you to now believe it, and then by and by, it may be a matter of privilege to you to see it.

But *faith does not always expect to see the goodness of God here at once*. She knows that this is the land of mist and fog, and she is glad if she can see even one step before her. Ay, and she is quite satisfied to go on even if she cannot see a step before her. She puts her foot down on what seems to be a

thick cloud, but she finds the ground solid beneath her. Without seeing where she is going, she takes the next step, relying upon the faithfulness of God, and again she is safe, and so she pursues her way in the thick darkness, and with greater joy than those who see far ahead, and compliment themselves upon their shrewdness. She knows that the day has not yet dawned, for the shadows have not yet fled away, so while she is in this mortal state, she walks by faith, not by sight.

Faith understands too, that *man is not endowed with that degree of judgment which might enable him, at present, even if the light were clearer, to see the goodness of the Lord distinctly.* With such an intellect as he now has, a child is not likely to see the wisdom of his father in the use of the rod. Even if he is a well instructed child, he may still scarcely be able to see it. The father is the better judge, he has seen more of life, he knows what the child does not know, and foresees what the child does not even dream of.

How can I, who can only see a little pool in front of me, judge as to how the Lord should manage the great ocean? Here am I sailing my tiny toy boat upon a pond, and am I to lay down rules of navigation for God in steering the leviathans of the deep across the shoreless seas? Here am I, an ant of an hour, creeping about upon the little anthill which I call my home, and am I to judge as to how God manages all the affairs of time and eternity? Down, you foolish pride, what know you? You are wise only when you know that you are a fool, but you are such a fool that you do not know even that until God teaches it to you. Lie down then, and trust where you cannot understand.

Faith also knows that *at present, she cannot see the whole plan and procedure of God's providential dealings with men.* We cannot fairly judge the working of providence by gazing at a part of it. There is an old joke about a student who took one brick to the market in order to show the people what kind of house he had to sell, but who could rightly judge of a house by looking at a single brick? Yet this would be less foolish than trying to judge as to the goodness of the Lord by the transactions of an hour.

If instead of trying to measure with a foot ruler, the distance between Sirius and the Pleiades, we would just believe that God has measured that vast distance to an inch, and leave such measurements to the Almighty Mind which can take in the whole universe at one sweep, how much wiser it would be on our part!

God sees the end from the beginning, and when the great drama of time shall be complete, then will the splendor as well as the goodness of the Lord be seen. When the whole painting shall be unrolled in one vast panorama, then shall we see its matchless beauty, and appreciate the inimitable skill of the divine Artist. But here we only look at one little patch of shade, or one tiny touch of color, and it appears to us to be rough or coarse. It may be that we shall be permitted in eternity, to see the whole of the picture, and meanwhile, let us firmly believe that He who is painting it knows how to do it, and that He, who orders all things according to the counsel of His own will, cannot fail to do that which is best for the creatures whom He has made, and preserved in being.

III. So finally, THERE IS A WONDERFULLY SUSTAINING INFLUENCE ABOUT THIS PRACTICAL BELIEF IN THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.

There is a man lying upon the surgeon's operating table, and the skillful surgeon has to cut deeply, why does the man endure that operation? *Because he believes it is for his lasting good.* He believes that the surgeon will not cause him an atom of pain more than is necessary, and therefore he lies quietly and endures it all. But imagine that any of us were there and that we fancied that the operator meant to do us harm instead of good. Then we should rebel, but the conviction that it is all right helps us to play the man, and to bear the pain with patience. That should be your attitude towards God my dear friend. May your belief in His goodness enable you to bear the sharp cuts of the knife which He is using upon you.

He must have been a bold man who was the first to plough the ground, and to bury bushels of good, golden wheat in the earth, but nowadays, our farmers do it as a matter of course. They go to the granary, take out that which is very valuable, go off to where they have made the death trench ready to receive it, and cast it in there, knowing that unless it is cast in there to die, it will not bring forth fruit. But they believe to see the fruit that will spring from it, every farmer, when he sows his wheat, has the golden

sheaves before his mind's eye, and the shouts of the harvest home ring in anticipation in his ear, and therefore, he parts with his treasured store of wheat and parts with it cheerfully.

So, dear friends, let us part with our friends, and part with our health, and part with our comforts, and part with life itself if that is necessary, believing that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Let me just add, that if there is such sustaining power about believing to see the goodness of the Lord even here, *what must result from the still higher belief of seeing the goodness of the Lord in another and better world than this?* The expectation of that bliss may well bear us up on its wings far above all the trials and troubles of this present life, so let us entreat the Holy Spirit to administer to us this heavenly cordial. Then, in the strength of the Lord, let us go forth to serve Him, with body, soul, and spirit, to the highest degree that is possible to us.

If there are any of you who have never believed, let me just tell you what is necessary ere I close my discourse. The way of salvation is this—Believe God's Word, believe that your Maker cannot lie, trust His Son, whom He has given to be the Savior of all who trust Him, and rely upon what His Word has declared, "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." If you trust in Christ, even if you have not a fraction of other evidence of your salvation, you are a saved soul on that evidence alone.

Cast yourself upon Him, and you shall find that declaration to be true to you, "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." But if you believe not, remember that this declaration is equally true, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." May God save all of you from that awful doom, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 27

David is in the darkness of sorrow, his enemies are many and mighty, and they make a dead set against him, and seek to utterly destroy him, but he finds his comfort where every true believer must ever seek his solace, that is, in his God. Thus sweetly does the psalmist sing.

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

David leaves the broken cisterns of the earth which can hold no water, and goes directly to the divine fountainhead. He does not say, "Ahithophel is my light; Uzzia, the Ashterathite, is my friend and my joy," but he says, "JEHOVAH is my light." Candles soon burn out, but the sun shines on, and eventually, "the sun shall be turned into darkness," but JEHOVAH, our God, is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

David does not say, "Joab is the strength of my life; Benaiah and the Cherethites are my bodyguard," but he says, "JEHOVAH is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" It is the height of Christian faith to find everything good in God, and it is an evil hour for us when we begin to trust anywhere but in Him. Build your foundation for eternity on a firm and unyielding soil, O believer, and let every stone that is laid thereon be quarried from the Rock of Ages.

2. *When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*

If we are on the Lord's side, discomfiture of our enemies shall be total and final, they shall fall to the ground. They may be very many, and very varied, so as to be described under two names—enemies and foes, they may be very ferocious, so that, like the wild beasts of the forest, they are ready to tear the flesh of their prey and devour it, and they may be able to make such attacks as actually come upon us, but just at the moment when they think they shall be able to swallow us, our God will interpose for our deliverance. It is marvelous how near to the edge of the precipice of ruin the Lord sometimes lets His

people go, yet He always delivers them just at the right moment, and causes their enemies to stumble and fall.

3. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

True and simple faith in God alone always begets courage. It is the man who is trusting to the creature who is the coward, but he who truly trusts in the Creator becomes a hero. Faith is the food upon which God would have His children fed, so, if you would do deeds of daring, lean only upon God, and then you shall have your heart's desire.

4. One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after;

A true Christian is a man of one idea, but that one idea is the noblest that ever possessed the human mind, or influenced the human heart. This idea is one which not only finds a lodging in his brain, but he carries it out in the practice of his daily life, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after." And what is that one thing?

4. That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

That is, to gaze upon the mystery of God in Christ, for is not Christ "the beauty of the LORD?" He is rightly called "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," so all that we need on earth, or in heaven, is a perpetual vision of Jesus Christ, "To behold the beauty of the LORD," and constantly to be enabled to present our petitions in His temple, and to receive gracious answers of peace to our supplications.

*"Father, my soul would fain abide
Within Thy temple, near Thy side;
But if my feet must hence depart,
Still keep Thy dwelling in my heart."*

5. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:

The pavilion was the many colored tent of the king, embroidered with needlework and richly furnished. It was always placed in the center of the encampment, so that if there were a night attack, the enemy must first break through the ranks of the armed men before reaching the royal pavilion. So the Christian is put into the very center of the Lord's host. God's sovereignty encloses him, and God's angels surround him, and the enemy must first break through the angelic guard, and overcome all the heavenly powers, before any one believer can be destroyed.

5. In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;

"The secret of his tabernacle" was the Holy of holies, into which no man but the high priest ever entered, and even he only entered it once a year, but now the Christian is admitted into the holiest place of all, through the sacrifice of Christ, and Christ's atonement and the sovereignty of God conjoin to make the Christian's position absolutely safe forever.

5. He shall set me up upon a rock.

The Rock of ages is immovable, it stirs not in the fiercest storm that ever rages. God is immutable, He abides the same forever, so that we have three firm grounds of confidence—God's sovereignty, Christ's sacrifice, and God's immutability.

6. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies around me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

As David's trust was in his Lord, all his praise was to his Lord, and where we place our confidence, there let us also display our gratitude. If we trust in men, it is not surprising if we worship and praise men, but if we alone trust in God, our homage and gratitude will be laid at His feet.

7-8. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

Happy is the man who has a tender conscience—whose heart is like the waves of the sea, which are easily moved by the breath of heaven—so that when God breathes upon him by His Holy Spirit, his soul is moved and controlled by that Spirit.

9. *Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger:*

The sharpest trial a Christian can know is to be forsaken of his God. As the very pith of the agony of Christ upon the cross lay in His being deserted by His Father, so the extremity of a believer's anguish is found when he also has to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Send us any trial that You will, O Lord, but let us never lose the light of Your countenance! We are rich in poverty, we are strong in weakness, we are healthful in sickness, we are living even in death while we have our God with us, but if our Lord shall once hide His face from us, we are in trouble indeed.

9. *Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.*

Beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, use your past experience to encourage you for the present, draw arguments from your past experience to use with God in prayer, even as David did, "Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." "When my soul was burdened with sin, thou wast my Helper. Thou didst enable me to look to Christ when I lost friend after friend, when I passed through fierce conflicts with the devil; when I was sick, and health and strength failed me, thou wast my Helper."

Many of you can thus look back upon a long life, and say to God of it all, "Thou hast been my Helper," and this gives you a foothold in your wrestling with the great Angel of the Covenant, so mind that you grasp Him firmly and say, "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation."

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me,—*

They are not likely to do that, yet if they should do so, what then?

10-11. *Then the LORD will take me up. Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies.*

This is a prayer which all Christians have good need to pray, for there are so many enemies who will, if they can, cause us to stumble, so many who watch for our halting, that we need to pray, "Lead me in a plain path, because of my enemies." Yet let me also say to you that it matters not how carefully and warily you may walk, nor how holy you may be, you will be sure to be slandered, ay, and sometimes by Christian people too. There are always some to tell the lie, and others to repeat it, and some to believe in it, and even to rejoice in it. It would be a mercy if some people had no tongues, for if they had none, they would commit far less sin than they do now.

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.*

David found enemies, and so will you, and the holier you are, the more shall you have of them. Birds pick the ripest fruit, the highest towers cast the longest shadows, and so is it that the highest holiness is generally the object of the most cruel attacks. Well, what are they to do who are passing through this trial? Do? Why go to their God about that as well as about everything else.

13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.*

With troubles without, and fears within, and slanderers and enemies of all sorts around him, the Christian had almost fainted, but faith puts the divine smelling-bottle to his nose, and as soon as ever the nostrils perceive the sweet perfume of God's faithfulness, the man is revived, "I had fainted, unless I had believed." So you see that you must do either the one or the other, you must either believe or faint, for by unbelief and sin, a spiritual fainting fit will soon come on.

14. *Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.*

Wait on no one else, wait only on Him, and then you shall not be discouraged or faint-hearted, wherefore, "wait, I say, on the LORD."

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.